

REMARKS

Claims 1-31, and 68 were previously pending in this application. By this amendment, Applicants are canceling claim 10 without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 1, 11, 12, and 17 have been amended. New claims 69-92 have been added. As a result, claims 1-9, 11-31, 68-92 are pending for examination with claims 1, 11, 17, 18, and 27 being the only independent claims. No new matter has been added.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants acknowledge the Examiner's finding that claims 18-31 and 68 are allowable and that claims 10, 11, and 17 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of their base claims and any intervening claims. Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of allowable claim 10. Accordingly, claim 10 has been canceled. Claim 11 has been rewritten in independent form to include its base claim 1. Claim 17 has been rewritten to include all of the limitations of its base claim 1, and intervening claims 15 and 16.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

In the Office Action, claims 1-9, 12, and 14-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the admitted prior art in view of Uehara (U.S. Patent No. 4,916,811) and optionally Csipkes (U.S. Patent No. 6,122,936), and also unpatentable over Uehara in view of the admitted prior art, and Csipkes. Claim 13 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Uehara, the admitted prior art, and Csipkes, or alternatively over the admitted prior art, Uehara, Csipkes and further in view of Bloom (U.S. Patent No. 6,003,341).

Without acceding to the propriety of the Examiner's positions, Applicants have canceled or amended certain of these claims to expedite prosecution and place this application in condition for allowance. As indicated above, claim 1 has been rewritten to incorporate all the limitations of allowable claim 10, such that claim 1 should be allowed. Claim 12 has been amended to now depend from claim 1. Claims 2-9, and 12-16 depend from claim 1 and should be in condition for allowance for at least the same reasons. Accordingly, withdrawal of these rejections is respectfully requested.

Applicants reserve the right to file one or more divisional or continuation applications directed to the rejected claims and/or any other canceled subject matter.

New Claims

Applicants have added new dependent claims 69-92 to further define aspects of the invention. New claims 69-81 depend on independent claim 11, and should be in condition for allowance for at least the same reasons. New claims 69-81 are directed to features similar to claims 2-9, and 12-16. New claims 82-92 depend on independent claim 17, and should be in condition for allowance for at least the same reasons. New claims 82-92 are directed to features similar to claims 2-9, and 12-14.

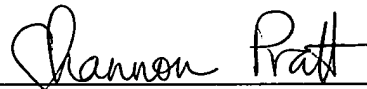
CONCLUSION

A Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. The Examiner is requested to call the undersigned at the telephone number listed below if this communication does not place the case in condition for allowance.

If this response is not considered timely filed and if a request for an extension of time is otherwise absent, Applicants hereby request any necessary extension of time. If there is a fee occasioned by this response, including an extension fee, that is not covered by an enclosed check, please charge any deficiency to Deposit Account No. 23/2825.

Respectfully submitted,

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